

HUMAN RIGHTS – SUSTAINABILITY – CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, PART II: SOME REMARKS ON SUSTAINABILITY

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Abstract: The paper is a part of a series of articles devoted to the relations between three important concepts co-shaping the contemporary global world: human rights, sustainability and corporate social responsibility. Various historical roots of this idea will be presented.

Keywords: sustainability, sustainable development, globalization.

1. Introduction

This paper, in accordance with the introduction to the previous article, is continuation of the previous paper devoted to human rights. The history of both ideas (i.e. human rights and sustainable development) manifests important similarities. Both concepts play also an important role in cultural/intellectual processes being a part of a macro-process of globalisation. These ideas also play a fundamental role in determining axiological fundamental values of various policies – from global (created by international organisations, e.g. UN) through national to local. Furthermore, both concepts can be viewed as complementary: the idea of human rights puts an individual in the centre of their interest, whereas the idea of sustainability places their focus on human community. The human (global) community is the largest human group comprising all living individuals and (to some extent) those living in the future. The quality of life of individuals depends on a state of the world.

With language of moral intuition instead of a scientific analysis, I would say that sustainable development is such a development which brings us increasingly closer to a world where all individuals have chances of good life. Obviously, this formulation defines only the starting point for analyses, especially those that will be presented in this paper.

2. Sustainability in historical perspective

Both the very word “sustainability” and the ideas it expresses have history which is longer than we might expect: it reaches back to the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries. Interestingly (especially if we remember that one of the greatest environmental, economic, political and global issues is exploitation of the Amazon Rainforest), its beginnings are related to the history of forestry: John Evelyn (1620-1706), an English writer, published in 1664 an essay (presented two years earlier to the Royal Society) “*Sylva, or A Discourse of Forest-Trees and A Propagation of Timber*,” “recognized as one of the most influential texts on forestry ever published” (Wikipedia). One of sentences from this text should be quoted: “Sowing and planting of trees had to be regarded as a national duty of every landowner, in order to stop the destructive over-exploitation of natural resources”¹. His ideas, combined with those of Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619-1683), inspired Hans Carl von Carlowitz (1645-1714) – a high-ranking officer in the administration of Augustus II the Strong, the king of Poland and elector of Saxony. His book “*Sylvicultura oeconomic*” (issued in 1713) is regarded as “the first comprehensive treatise on forestry.” In this book, he formulated the idea of “*nachhaltende Nuzung*” (eng. ‘sustainable exploitation’). Furthermore, von Carlowitz is regarded, at least in Germany, as “*der Entfunder der Nachhaltigkeit*” – the inventor of sustainability.

Before referring to contemporary history of this term, other processes should be at least briefly outlined if inside details are to give a broader (although not detailed) image of the history of the concept of sustainability. One of currents could be named “growing interest in the Nature”². With this phrase we could describe a set of various phenomena, such as a role of nature in: (Romantic) poetry, painting (or even music), development of tourism (alpinism, mountaineering in the Tatra Mountains, etc.), non-professional ornithology (1895, USA – the National Audubon Society) and – perhaps the most important example – establishing national parks (the first in the world: Yellowstone, 1872; the first in Poland: Pieniny, 1932). An important role played also the development of biological sciences. Not omitting Linnaeus, Lamarck and – first of all – Darwin, in the context of issues concerning sustainability, the name E. Haeckel (1834-1919), who introduced the notion of ecology (1866), and A. von Humboldt (1769-1859), who in his works in the field of biogeography predicted environmental ideas, should be mentioned.

Central ideas of ecology may (or even should) be put into a much broader context, i.e. holism or system thought. I will start with holism/system thought in social theory. Two names ought not to be omitted here: K. Marx (1818-1883) and T. Parsons (1902-1979). Despite obvious and profound differences between historical materialism and functionalism,

¹ It is worthwhile to note that the overexploitation of forests was a result of growing demand for timber being, in turn, the result of growing shipbuilding – a consequence of European expansion initiated by Columbus in 1492 (his expansion is regarded by many historians and theoreticians as the “first wave” of globalisation).

² J.-J. Rousseau [1713-1778] can be regarded as a precursor of this trend.

the general idea of “systemness” of social reality is common for them. This analogy deserves attention.

Obviously, “systemness” is characteristic of various types of objects, not only social ones. This fact resulted in the development of a general system theory, i.e. a quasi-mathematical theory attempting to construct models to be applied to biological, social and technological systems. L. von Bertalanffy (1901-1972), an Austrian biologist, is most often regarded as a founder of this theory; his first paper on this subject was published in 1945. Interestingly, almost at the same time – and independently – a great American mathematician, N. Wiener (1894-1964), published a book titled “Cybernetics or Control in the Animal and the Machine” (1948) in which he laid foundations to the new discipline (and gave it its name). Another important name should be added here: J. W. Forrester (1918-2016), an American engineer (1972, the IEEE Medal of Honor – a “Nobel prize” for electrical and electronic engineers). He is regarded as a founder of system dynamics – an important part of the system theory. He was also the first to apply computers to systems modelling. He summed up his (and his team) achievements in a book on “Industrial dynamics” (1961) – still in use. A few years later – in 1968 (a few remarks on the historical importance of this year will be given below) – an Italian economist and manager (who developed the Argentinian branch of Fiat) – A. Peccei (1908-1984) – and British chemist – A. King (1909-2007) – founded the Club of Rome. As it is well known, its main form of activity is sponsoring preparation of reports on various global issues (the forty-seventh published in 2019). The most famous and most controversial was the first report – “Limits to Growth” (1972). Mentioning this text we can return for a while to Forrester. Although D. Meadows, his wife and some other persons are the authors of the report, it was Forrester who gave theoretical and computational bases for computer simulations being a core element of this text and its factual foundation. It could be said that, looking back, a number of intellectual currents combine together in this report. On the other hand, looking ahead, the publication of this report is a part of various processes which will manifest themselves in next decades. As regards the preceding years, this report supported newly born environmental (“green”) movements. In early periods, a number of small and temporal initiatives could be listed. Let me limit myself here to a few more important points: in 1961, the World Wild Fund (still active) was established; in 1962, R. Carson (1907-1964) published “Silent Spring” which brought the environmental issues to a large audience; in 1969-1972, one of the greatest non-governmental environmental organisations – Greenpeace – came into existence.

After having mentioned the intellectual (and social-organisational) history, it seems proper to write now a few words on a broader social and political context of this history (but limited to the post-war period).

As we remember, almost soon after the end of the World War II began a period called in the world history as the “Cold War”.³ Somewhat symbolically, the proclamation of foreign policy strategy in the speech (later known as “Truman Doctrine” or “Doctrine of Containment”) by the U.S. President H. Truman (1884-1972), delivered to the Congress on 29 March 1947, is often regarded as the starting point for the “Cold War.” A symbolic date for its end may be more difficult to specify: quite a few historians accept the date of the so-called (as almost always the real story is longer and more complex) “fall of the Berlin Wall” (9 November 1989), but some other historians prefer the date of 26 December 1991 – dissolution of the Soviet Union (USSR). Leaving the symbolic dates aside, the “Cold War” lasted ca. forty-two or forty-six years. It is rather obvious that during this period the level of tensions between those two bloc countries was changing. Precise characteristics of these changes is very difficult. Nonetheless, one can state that the years 1950-1953 (the Korean War) were most dramatic. The death of J. Stalin (1879-1953) and the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) (1956) started “thaw” and “destalinization” that resulted in some changes in the Soviet foreign policy. Somewhat paradoxically, the process of lowering the tensions between “blocs” was accelerated by a very serious crisis in the USA-USSR relations, known as “Cuban Missile Crisis” (16-28 October 1962). Despite the fact that (but maybe because of that) the world was – as many historians maintain – on the verge of the world nuclear warfare, “Détente” was initiated: one year later (5 August 1963) the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) was signed. It had not only political but also environmental positive consequences (only underground nuclear weapons testing was allowed). In the subsequent years, a number of important treaties improving nuclear security were signed (1968, 1972).

The problems regarding nuclear weapon and disarmament are among the most important ones in the 1960s. However, it seems necessary to mention some social and cultural processes that had their apogee in 1968. It should be noted that in this year, 23 years had passed since the end of the war. Young people born at the end or after the war, having no own memories concerning that time, brought up in the period of relative well-being (as regards Germany, the term *Wirtschaftswunder* was used in a British journal already in 1950), entered their early adulthood in the mid-1960s. The events of those years remain a sociological puzzle until today. Nevertheless, even if we lack satisfying explanations of the “youth revolution” (or of Protests of 1968 – the 1968 World Revolution as maintains American sociologist I. Wallerstein [1930-2019]), we have some factual knowledge. As regards roots, we should note that probably for the first time in history a generation gained identity just as generation – especially when it comes to (youth) music (E. Presley – 1956, The Beatles – 1960, the Monterey Pop Festival/ the Summer of Love – 1967), (youth) way of dressing, the hippie movement (the “Human Be-In” event in San Francisco – 14 January 1967 – is regarded as the beginning of this

³ This phrase was used for the first time by the English writer G. Orwell [1903-1950] in his essay published on 19 October 1945; later this term was popularised by an American thinker, W. Lippmann [1889-1974], in his book on “The Cold War” [1947].

movement); in short: specific youth culture or counterculture (this term may have been introduced by T. Roszak [1933-2011] in his once popular book “The Making of a Counter Culture” [1969]).

As regards consequences, the events of 1968 played a part in the development of various “new social movements”. The phrase refers to a group of social movements which are similar at least under two respects. Firstly, they have been undertaken previously at best on the margin of the interest of political parties, trade unions and other “old movements”. Secondly, they came into existence (or at least gained some popularity) in the 1960s. The women’s/feminist, peace, LGBT and “green” movements are usually grouped together under this umbrella term⁴.

The new social movements gained intellectual support from some philosophers. First of all, the representatives of the Frankfurt School should be mentioned here. In 1969, German thinkers – Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) and Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969), published 2nd edition of their famous book “Dialectic of Enlightenment” which has played an important role in criticism of the idea of progress. The short article of their student J. Habermas (1929-) “Technology and Science as Ideology” (1968) contributed also to that criticism. Another member of this School, H. Marcuse (1898-1980), the author of “One-Dimensional Man. Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society” (1964) and “Eros and Civilization. A Philosophical Investigation into Freud” (1966) became even an icon of a sort of youth/student movement.

In addition to this remark on M. Horkheimer and his colleagues, let’s add a few ones on the idea of progress and criticism of this idea.

Although some scholars debate whether embryos of the idea of progress can be found in the Ancient or Medieval thought, there is very little doubt that even if this idea did not come into existence in 18th century, it was the age of Enlightenment when this idea was developed and started to gain popularity, and to exert increasingly greater influence on various social processes. A short outline of this history should be presented in a separate paper. Therefore, I will mention only the names of two French aristocrats who played a particularly important role in the history of the idea of progress – A.R.J. Turgot (1727-1781), the author of “A Philosophical Review of the Successive Advances of the Human Mind” (1750), described as “the first complete statement of the Idea of Progress,” as well as Nicolas de Condorcet (1743-1794), the author of “The Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind” (the book was published in 1795, after his tragic death). Both works were written before or in the very early phase of the first Industrial Revolution (beginnings: ca. 1770). One should not be thus surprised that it was the development of science which was regarded as the main factor of progress, not the development of technology. Nevertheless, the fascination with technological progress was growing for the whole 19th century. Interestingly, and somewhat

⁴ It should be noted that the anti-globalist movements which, as for now, had their apogee at the turn of millennia – ca. 1999-2001, had some similarities to three decades of earlier movements.

surprisingly – if we remember how science and technology contributed to the atrocities of the World War I – the process was not stopped by the war. An example can be the Italian futurist movement or Polish avant-garde (e.g. T. Peiper's [1891-1969] once famous slogan "City, Mass, Machine"). It seems that only World War II brought fundamental change of attitudes (perhaps Auschwitz and Hiroshima – to put it symbolically – caused this change).

Despite ending these remarks on the idea of progress, we should stay for a while with philosophy, or – to be more precise – with axiology. The very etymology of this term is interesting from the perspective determined by the core problems mentioned in this paper. The idea of progress came into existence at the end of the 19th century. It was to comprise some (or all) issues of two philosophical disciplines: ethics and aesthetics. The former has existed since Socrates (or Aristotle – it depends on applied criteria). The history of the latter is more complicated: we can find beginnings of what we can now call aesthetics in Plato's philosophy, however, this discipline gained a degree of autonomy only in the 18th century. Good was the subject of ethics, Beauty – of aesthetics; Truth was important but not central subject of epistemology. In any case, this Triad (Good, Truth, Beauty) was for centuries one of the central ideas of the European culture. Only at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, a double philosophical discovery was made. On the one hand, the variety of epistemological, aesthetical and moral values were discovered. On the other hand, axiology discovered new categories of values – other than those three traditional (e.g. praxiological).

I would like to focus also on the development (partly as an effect of intensification of relations between Europe and other parts of the world) of ethnography, ethnology, social and cultural anthropology for a reason. All these disciplines contributed to establishing an important trend – cultural relativism. The role which played non-European art in the development of European culture supported this trend (e.g. African sculpture and cubism). To put it briefly, both cultural relativism and axiology in philosophy contributed to the development of axiological pluralism. Why is it necessary to write here about it? Axiological pluralism is a great subject itself. One point is rather little controversial: the definition of progress is relatively simple if our axiological system is also simple – the richer (complex, etc.) axiological system is, the more difficult is to define progress. Hence, it may be stated that axiological pluralism is one of the sources of criticism which the idea of progress evokes.

Now I want to shortly mention about the 20th-century ethics. To put it very schematically, for decades a great deal of ethical literature was devoted to the questions of meta-ethics (the nature of moral/ethical theses, the ways of moral argumentation, debates between proponents of emotivism and ethical objectivism, etc.) – philosophically important and interesting branch of ethics, but having little direct relevance for struggling with real-life moral issues. The situation started to change in 1960s and 1970s. A few ethical disciplines – usually grouped under the umbrella term "applied ethics" – started to gain autonomy, both theoretical and institutional, and develop. Bioethics, environmental ethics, ethics of technology, scientific ethics, or even ethics of sport and business ethics (discussed more broadly in the 3rd part of this

series of papers). In this paper, I am going to formulate some comments on scientific ethics and ethics of technology (sometimes they are regarded as one discipline, sometimes as two similar ones, but different).

As regards scientific ethics, its early elements can be found in moral considerations of scientists. Two historical moments should be mentioned here at least. Firstly, the construction of the atomic bomb and its use in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was not incidental that physicists (among them J. Rotblat [1908-2005], a Pole awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in (1995) were particularly engaged in the activities of the Pugwash movement (1957) working towards reducing the risk of nuclear conflicts. Secondly, ca. twenty years after the discovery of the DNA structure (1953), prominent scientists met in Palomar, the USA, at the Asilomar Conference on Recombinant DNA (1975). This conference formulated a number of guidelines (among them those that banned some types of experiments⁵) for researches in this domain. Nevertheless, regardless of possible results, one may conclude that the development of science can be, contrary to what was believed earlier, morally wrong or ambivalent. This view is today, if not commonly accepted then at least deserving a serious debate.

More or less the same could be said about technology. That is why, to avoid repetitions, I will only add that a new interesting idea was born in 1970s, and already in an institutional form: in 1972, the USA Congress established the Office for Technology Assessment. Somewhat paradoxically, it was closed in 1995 – at the time when similar institutions were being established in Europe (e.g. EU – 1987, UK – 1989/1992, Germany – 1995).

Virtually all these processes were influenced to some extent by social and cultural developments, which gained their culmination in 1968.

The events of that year, the development of new social movements, the changing “cultural climate” – all these factors influenced the world of politics as well. At the end of 1960’s, environmental issues became public, political problems. The report presented on 26 May 1969 to the UN General Assembly by U Thant (1909-1974), then the third Secretary-General of the United Nations (1961 to 1971), should be mentioned. It resulted in the UN Conference on the Human Environment (5-16 May 1972) which adopted its “Declaration”. On the basis of seven theses specifying environmental challenges faced by humanity, this document formulated twenty six principles which environmental policy of all countries should be guided.

About ten years later (1983), the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) was established, and G. H. Brundtland (1939-) – the Norway Prime Minister for three times – was appointed by the UN Secretary-General, J.P. de Cuellar (1920)⁶. It should be emphasised that it was not good time for working on global problems: the Soviet–Afghan War

⁵ To what extent these and similar activities influenced scientific practice could be a subject of interesting historical-sociological study.

⁶ In 2014, she received, as the first person, the Chinese Tang Prize in Sustainable Development and the National German Sustainability Award – established in 2008).

(1979-1989), the martial law in Poland (1981-1982) – these events contributed to a great increase in political tensions between the two superpowers and their allies. Furthermore, the M. Thacher's (1925-2013) premiership (1979-1990) and R. Reagan's (1911-2004) presidency (1981-1989) contributed to profound changes (known as thacherism and reaganomics) in economic and social politics. These changes promoted policies little interested in the issues (and still less in strategies) undertaken by Brundtland's Commission. Nevertheless, after four years (1987), the Commission presented a large text (in fact: a book) "Our Common Future." This text made the "sustainable development" (and "sustainability") a widely known and used term. It contributed to popularisation of "global thinking" as well.

This report played an important role in establishing a new type of world politics. The first international conference on environmental issues was held in 1972. Only after twenty years (in 1992), a similar conference (dubbed the Earth Summit), celebrating the anniversary of the previous one, was held in Rio de Janeiro. The UN Programme of Action, known as Agenda 21, was adopted.

The next World Summit on Sustainable Development (informally: Rio+10 Conference) was held in Johannesburg and the Rio+20 Conference – again in Rio de Janeiro.

In meantime, the U.N. Millennium Summit took place in New York (2002). Eight Millennium Development Goals (including such relatively concrete goals as "combating HIV/AIDS") were adopted. They were replaced, however, by "Sustainable Development Goals" – a programme of action adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2016; this document contains seventeen goals to be achieved by 2030 (according to the Agenda 2030 of which this programme is a part).

What are the effects of all these meetings, declarations, programmes? Surely, not so great as we would wish for (but perhaps greater than many would have expected). Any serious, more specific answer could be formulated only on the basis of large empirical (statistical) investigation. This is a task for a research team rather than for an individual researcher. Nonetheless, even if it would turn out that very little has been achieved "in real world," these all summits should not be ignored. All these meetings brought about two important changes. Firstly, they have contributed to the change of way of thinking about what politics (both domestic and international) is – this applies not only to army, banks, criminality, but also to climate, biodiversity, oceans, diseases. Secondly, they have popularised the idea of common interests and common responsibility of the whole humanity. Some would say that it is very little. When evaluating this from the perspective of challenges and threats, such opinion can be accepted. Nevertheless, when looking at all of this from a historical perspective, taking into account ca. one hundred and fifty years of the process of nation-building that was still in its early phase (e.g. Italian unification – 1860, unification of Germany – 1871), the image of the last three decades should be rather different – from the point of view of global history, thirty years is a very short period of time.

3. Sustainability – some theoretical remarks

As it has been demonstrated in the historical outline above, the notion of sustainability (sustainable development) has complex and relatively long history. On the other hand, the moment from which this term has gained popularity and has become important as a conceptual instrument of (political, economic, etc.) decision-making, can be precisely defined. It is the moment of issuing “Our Common Future” – the report (1987) of Brundtland’s Commission. Therefore, it seems appropriate to start these remarks from commenting on the meaning of this term in this document (particularly in chapt. 2.1. titled “Towards the Concept of Sustainable Development”).

The definition included at the beginning of the text is very simple: “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Two problematic notions are used here: development and needs. We should note that these both terms are – from the theoretical (philosophical, sociological, etc.) point of view – controversial and their meanings could be interpreted differently, depending on the contexts of various sociological, psychological or philosophical theories. This remark, however, is by no means critical: the authors of the report had to minimise academic considerations. Nevertheless, such important notion deserves also theoretical reflection and my remark indicates one of its directions – it would be interesting to analyse how different conceptions of development or needs influence the meaning of sustainable development. Some suggestions can be found in subsequent parts of this text; they concern mainly the notion of needs. Two points deserve particular attention. Firstly, the use of the term “essential needs” (the adjective “basic” is also used). Without involving into debates on essential nature of needs (from philosophical or psychological point of view – quite important question), the authors of the report only list these needs, i.e. food, clothing, shelter and job. However, in addition to these basic needs, the report contains also the notion of “legitimate aspirations for an improved quality of life.” Secondly, authors of the report introduce also the concept of “perceived needs” which (contrary to the essential ones) are “culturally and socially determined”. In the same passage, such terms as “living standards” and “consumption standards” appear. These terms are associated with the notion of values: “sustainable development requires the promotion of values that encourage consumption standards that are within the bounds of the ecological possible and to which all can reasonably aspire.”

We should return now to the definition of sustainable development, contained in the Brundtland’s Report. It “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” When viewed from the perspective determined by our everyday sense of obviousness (self-evidence), this formulation might appear just (almost) obvious, but from a historical perspective, its originality and novelty should not be

omitted. Firstly, this opinion is based on the “Discovery of the Future” (the *problematique* suggested by this term is very broad and interesting, but I have to limit myself to two brief mentions: *primo* – this discovery is related to the idea of progress; and *secundo* – it is complementary to the “Discovery of History”). The idea of responsibility towards future generations (i.e. towards people who do not even exist yet) is new and philosophically intriguing. Secondly, this opinion seems to presuppose the conviction that future generations not only just will exist, but they should exist. At first glance, such conviction seems to be so obvious that it makes no sense to articulate it. However, “Imperative of Responsibility” (1979), the famous book of German philosopher – Hans Jonas (1903-1993), should be invoked. Although the book is very rich in ideas, its basic thesis is very concise and simple: human kind is responsible for its very existence in the future. This thesis presupposes two more ones. The first thesis is descriptive (in a very broad sense of the word, including modal descriptions): the non-existence of humanity – due to its own activities (nuclear or environmental self-destruction) – is possible (the question of the probability of self-destruction is very complex and difficult, and even shortest remarks on it cannot be made here). The second thesis is normative: human kind should exist. I should stop here because my aim was only to indicate close relations between future generations – and about a huge subject comprising many issues: from most fundamental philosophical ones (human nature) through ethical (responsibility) to political and economic – and the idea of sustainable development.

It is important to emphasise an egalitarian aspect of the concept of sustainable development presented in the report: “Sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to satisfy their aspirations for a better life”. Egalitarianism seems to have a double sense in the report. When it is stressed that “priority should be given” to essential needs of the “world’s poor,” these words seem to have mainly moral connotations. However, when it is said that “physical sustainability cannot be secured unless development policies pay attention to such considerations as changes in access to resources and in the distribution of costs and benefits,” it is a theoretical (hypo)thesis.

Now we should briefly discuss some theoretical assumptions found in the report. In particular, it should be noted that its authors use also the notion (described as “narrow”) of physical sustainability. It is not precisely defined, but one can suppose that it is an approximate synonym of ecological (i.e. defined in purely biological terms) sustainability. It is held that the “narrow notion of physical sustainability implies a concern for social equity between generations.” Intuitively, I am prone to accept this thesis; however, it would be good to know what exactly the word “implies” means here and in which way this thesis should be validated. As regards the second part of the thesis quoted above, I am rather sceptical. Hence, the questions arise: Why a concern for social equity between generations “must logically be extended to equity within each generation”? Is any rule postulating equity within a group (a class, a nation, gender, etc.) but not between groups (classes, nations, gender, etc.) inherently incoherent? A negative answer would demand rather serious work. Nevertheless,

I am convinced that this work would be finally crowned with success. On the other hand, this thesis may be true if it was translated into the language of psychology / sociology – it is much more likely that people will accept concern for equity between them and next generations if they themselves live in egalitarian society.

As regards some report's theses on demography, one important idea is rather suggested than explicitly formulated. It is said in the report that "sustainable development can only be pursued if demographic developments are in harmony with the changing productive potential of the ecosystem." The phrase "in harmony" is metaphorical. This thesis could be formulated more precisely if we would use the notion of "process velocity." We could say that if the (measurable) discrepancy among velocities of respective processes exceeds a threshold, such a situation has negative consequences for these processes as well as the whole process of global development. This idea might be generalised in a few ways. Firstly, by availing of the concept of "process velocity." Secondly, by introducing the concept of "admissible level of discrepancy" among some parameters describing global system. Using this concept, we could interpret e.g. the following theses: "high levels of productive activity and widespread poverty can coexist, and can endanger the environment;" "physical sustainability cannot be secured unless development policies pay attention to such considerations as changes in access to resources and in the distribution of costs and benefits".

In my opinion, particularly interesting results can be obtained if the notion of "admissible level of discrepancy" is applied to the thesis that limitations of development are "imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs".

Perhaps one step further might be suggested. Systems (in general) and complex systems (in particular) differ as to their "degrees of systemness" (a parameter at least theoretically measurable). Intuitively, the proposition "the higher there is a degree of systemness of a system, the lower is its admissible discrepancy between its characteristic parameters" seems to be plausible. If we assume (and I am prone to do it) that one of the partial definitions of globalisation, which describes it as a process of obtaining a "high degree" of systemness, we receive an explanation why globalisation generates greater than ever need for "harmony" (sustainability). The egalitarian thesis (mentioned at the beginning of this chapter) concerning the globally negative effects of inequality might be regarded as concretisation of this, rather abstract, statement.

At the end of this chapter, two important theoretical theses should still be invoked. According to the first one, "goals of development must be defined in terms of sustainability in all countries." This thesis might be regarded as a partial definition of globalisation, which could be formulated as follows: the world has been globalised – sustainable development of a society (a country, a continent, a region, etc.) is possible only if the world development is sustainable. The second thesis concerns globalisation based on the notion of "human intervention in natural

systems.” Once such interventions “were small in scale and their impact limited,” and today they “are more drastic in scale and impact, and more threatening to life-support systems”.

4. Final remarks

The considerations presented in this text may be summarised as follows:

Firstly, the rise and growing popularity of the idea of sustainable development – despite the ways this term can be used (political or business public relations/propaganda, fashion, etc.) – reflect very profound and important changes in the global history. Globalisation of the world, acceleration of the history, and increasing technological power – these are probably the most important changes.

Secondly, different changes (especially technological ones) and their various consequences cannot be simply stopped – evolutionary nature of the world is today beyond any serious doubt. In spite of sometimes very profound differences (as to mechanisms of evolution, its directionality, etc.) among Ch. Darwin, K. Marx, H. Spencer, and hosts of their students, all they agree regarding this thesis – evolution cannot be stopped thus, *a fortiori*, changes cannot be stopped.

Thirdly, evolution (at least biological and social; cosmological is excluded here) is not a strongly deterministic (“Laplacian”) process. If so, various evolutionary paths are possible. At least in the case of social evolution, we are able to decide which path to choose, or – less ambitiously – which path(s) should be definitely avoided.

Fourthly, the minimal condition which any acceptable path of the future evolution of human civilisation should satisfy is simple: the path should be temporally unlimited (any endogenous end of human civilisation should be excluded; speculations on exogenously caused end should be left to cosmologists).

Fifthly, some stronger conditions can be considered. For instance, the idea of sustainability postulates that future generations should inherit the world in such a state that – assuming rational and responsible behaviour of future generations – they will be able to satisfy all their basic needs. We could also think about (rather strong) condition demanding the preservation of (at least minimal) “flexibility” of the global social world – the possibility (even if limited) that future generations will be able to decide what their life should be like.

Sixthly, as stresses “Brundtland’s Report”, sustainability (not as idea but as a material reality) presupposes minimal consensus as to development goals. It is obvious that such consensus can be achieved only as result of (rather long and difficult) negotiations (in the broadest sense of the word – including academic debates, parliamentary polemics, media discussions, etc.) Furthermore, it is also obvious that various (more or less) local interests will play a decisive role: “here-and-now” determines attitudes more strongly than “somewhere-and-

sometime”. On the other hand, the “radius” of “here-and-now” is not fixed; quite the contrary: it depends on various factors and can be very small or rather large. Good education (avoiding lofty moralising and abstract verbosity) could contribute to making these “radii” even larger. It should be noted also that some difficulties in negotiations results not from the differences of interests, but from the distortions of communication, in particular – from various languages (this word is not used here as, for instance, in the phrase “the Swahili language,” but like in such phrases as “language of businessmen,” “language of criminals,” “...of Thomists”, “...of positivists,” etc.) used in negotiations. Creation of a language (maximally precise and minimally emotionally-laden) to be used in negotiations on sustainability matters seems still to be a challenge for humanities and social sciences.

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